AN ANTE-BELLUM SERMON

by Paul Laurence Dunbar

We is gathahed hyeah, my brothahs,
In di howlin' wildaness,
Fu' to speak some words o comfo't
to each othah in distress.
An' we choose fu' ouah subjic'
Dis—-we'll 'splain it by an' by;
"An' de Lawd said, "Moses, Moses,"
An' de man said, Hyeah am I.'"

Now ole Pher'oh, down in Egypt
Was de wuss man evah bo'n,
An' he had de Hebrew chillun
Down dah wukin' in his co'n;
'Twell de Lawd got tiahed o' his foolin',
an' sez he: "I'll let him know'
Look hyeah, Moses, go tell Pher'oh
Fu' to let dem chillun go."

"An' ef he refuse do it,
I will make him rue de houah,
fu' I'll empty down on Egypt
All de vials of my powah."
Yes, he did—-an' Pher'oh's ahmy
Wasn't wurth a ha'f a dime;
Fu' de Lawd will he'p his chillum,
You kin trust him evah time.

An' you' enemies may 'sail you
In de back an' in de front;
But de Lawd is all aroun' you,
Fu' to ba' de battle's brunt.
Dey kin fo'ge yo'chains an' shackles
F'om de mountains to de sea;
But de Lawd will sen' some Moses
Fu' to set his chilun free.

An' de lan' shall hyeah his thundah,
Lak a blas' f'om Gab'el's ho'n,
Fu' de Lawd of hosts is mighty
When he girds his ahmor on.
But fu' feah some one mistakes me,
I will pause right hyeah to say,
Dat I'm still a-preachin' ancient,
I ain't talkin' bout to-day.

But I tell you, fellah christuns,
Things'll happen mighty strange;
Now, de Lawd done dis fu' Isrul,
An' his ways don't nevah change,
An' de love he showed to Isrul
Wasn't all on Isrul spent;
Now don't run an' tell yo' mastahs
Dat I's preachin' discontent.

'Cause I isn't; I'se a-judgin'
Bible people by dier ac's;
I'se a-givin' you de Scriptuah,
I'se a-handin' you de fac's.
Cose ole Pher'or b'lieved in slav'ry,
But de Lawd he let him see,
Dat de people he put bref in,
Evah mothah's son was free.

An' dah's othahs thinks lak Pher'or,
But dey calls de Scriptuah liar,
Fu' de Bible says "a servant
Is worthy of his hire,"
An' you cain't git roun' nor thoo dat,
An' you cain't git ovah it,
Fu' whatevah place you git in,
Dis hyeah Bible too'll fit.

So you see de Lawd's intention,
Evah sence de worl' began,
Was dat His almight freedom
Should belong to evah man,
But I think it would be bettah,
Ef I'd pause agin to say,
Dat I'm talkin' 'bout ouah freedom
In a Bibleistic way.

But de Moses is a-comin',
An' he's comin', suah and fas'
We kin hyeah his feet a-trompin',
We kin hyeah his trumpit blas'.
But I want to wa'n you people,
Don't you git too brigity;
An' don't you git to braggin'
"Bout dese things, you wait an' see.

But when Moses wif his powah
Comes an' sets us chillun free,
We will praise de gracious Mastah
Dat has gin us liberty;
An' we'll shout ouah halleluyahs,
On dat mighty reck'nin' day,
When we'se reco'nised ez citiz'
Huh uh! Chillun, let us pray!